



**U.S. Department of Justice**

Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco,  
Firearms and Explosives

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[www.atf.gov](http://www.atf.gov)

August 29, 2019

REFER TO: 2019-1251

Mr. Todd Feathers  
MuckRock News  
DEPT MR 67193  
411A Highland Avenue  
Somerville, MA 02144-2516  
67193-81713984@requests.muckrock.com

Dear Mr. Feathers:

This responds to your Freedom of Information Act (FOIA)/Privacy Act request dated July 10, 2019, and received by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) on the same day, in which you requested records concerning ATF eTrace Data. Your request has been assigned number 2019-1251. Please refer to this number on any future correspondence.

You have requested material, which ATF is required to maintain pursuant to the Gun Control Act (GCA) and/or is information contained in ATF Firearms Trace System database. This information is exempt from disclosure pursuant to Exemption (b)(3) of the FOIA and Public Law 112-55, 125 Stat. 552.

Exemption (b)(3) of the FOIA permits the withholding of information prohibited from disclosure by another statute only if one of two disjunctive requirements are met: the statute either (A) requires that the matters be withheld from the public in such a manner as to leave no discretion on the issue, or (B) establishes particular criteria for withholding or refers to particular types of matters to be withheld. Thus, a statute falls within the exemption's coverage if it satisfies any one of its disjunctive requirements.

Beginning in 2003, Congress placed restrictions on ATF's disclosure of certain GCA related information. In short, ATF can only provide certain GCA data to a law enforcement agency or a prosecutor solely in connection with a criminal investigation or prosecution. Beginning in Fiscal Year 2006, Congress included a provision within each iteration of the restriction, which effectively made the law permanent.

The most recent iteration of these various restrictions was included in ATF's 2012 Appropriation Bill, Public Law 112-55, 125 Stat. 552. Some of the information in the requested records falls

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within this restriction. Since the Fiscal Year 2006 through 2008 restrictions satisfy all the requirements of FOIA Exemption (b)(3), and the 2012 language is perpetuated from those restrictions, I am withholding the trace data pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552 (b)(3) and Public Law 112-55, 125 Stat. 552.

For your information, Congress excluded three discrete categories of law enforcement and national security records from the requirements of the FOIA. *See* 5 U.S.C. § 552(c). This response is limited to those records that are subject to the requirements of the FOIA. This is a standard notification that is given to all our requesters and should not be taken as an indication that excluded records do, or do not, exist.

You may contact our FOIA Public Liaisons, Darryl Webb or Zina Kornegay, at (202) 648-7390, for any further assistance and to discuss any aspect of your request. Additionally, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, Room 2510, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001, e-mail at [ogis@nara.gov](mailto:ogis@nara.gov); telephone at 202-741-5770; toll free at 1-877-684-6448; or facsimile at 202-741-5769.

If you are not satisfied with my response to this request, you may administratively appeal by writing to the Director, United States Department of Justice, Office of Information Policy (OIP), Sixth Floor, 441 G Street, NW, Washington, DC 20001, or you may submit an appeal through OIP's FOIAonline portal by creating an account on the following web site:  
<https://www.foiaonline.gov/foiaonline/action/public/home>. Your appeal must be postmarked or electronically transmitted within 90 days of the date of my response to your request. If you submit your appeal by mail, both the letter and the envelope should be clearly marked "Freedom of Information Act Appeal."

Sincerely,



Adam C. Siple  
Chief, Disclosure Division